

MORGAN COUNTY

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Director: Cindy R. Moses

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Juvenile detention facility
2. Transportation
3. Drug, alcohol and gang involvement

Issues

Issues are the primary concerns or problems facing children in the county.

Health - Children's (0 - 19) physical and mental well-being in the county.

Child Health and Safety

Policy Council Action Steps:

- conduct at least one annual community-wide conference, which addresses children's health and safety issues
- create a committee by the last month of the 2005/2006 fiscal year to provide multi-lingual health information and education to underserved groups with attention to language and cultural barriers
- establish a Morgan County Amber Alert committee to review existing alert procedures in the county and make recommendations for improvement and expansion; an annual report will be presented at the Child Safety Conference
- disseminate AllKids information quarterly to members of the Children's Policy Council
- each CPC member will complete an annual survey giving total numbers of AllKids brochures distributed and places distributed; AllKids data giving numbers of children being served by AllKids in the county will be provided to members annually
- CPC director will make available funding opportunities for providing, developing and expanding child health and safety programs and services via email and on the county CPC website on an ongoing basis
- establish a committee, which will prepare data and a description of the community needs for people, ages 0-19, who, have mental/physical disabilities and need supervised activities and environments
- develop a format through which service and treatment needs and

outcomes for community agencies can be quantified on an ongoing basis using science-based formats. Include components for education, law enforcement, mental health, information and referral agencies and advocacy organizations

- continue to provide programs and support for individuals with mental/physical disabilities who have aged out of head start and other daycare options but who may still require supervised activities and supervised environments
- to encourage the enhancement of quality childcare for working parents regardless of work schedule of the parents

Mental Health/Substance Abuse/Developmental Disability Prevention, Education and Treatment

Policy Council Action Steps:

- endorse reapplication of existing in-home therapeutic programs; grants to provide intervention and identification of at-risk youth such as the Our Kids grant
- support membership in the county substance abuse network and application for funding to sustain and expand programs
- endorse grant applications for the development of expansion of mental/health/substance abuse prevention, education and treatment programs for children and youth identified by the juvenile justice system. Identify available community resources for children and youth through MCCPC website and other media. Provide information to member agencies for distribution to people they serve

Safety - Children live free of abuse, neglect, crime, and drugs.

Substance abuse by adults and children

Policy Council Action Steps:

- promote awareness of this issue through support of and commitment to programs designed to address substance abuse
- provide a continuous open dialogue regarding the provision of services to families affected by substance abuse at each CPC meeting specifically regarding HIPAA regulations
- endorse programs that provide early identification and intervention of children and families with issues related to substance abuse and violence

Domestic (family) violence

Policy Council Action Steps:

- re-institute and invite the domestic violence coalition to be represented on the county CPC
- promote collaboration among agencies concerned with child abuse, domestic violence, and spousal abuse
- endorse services involved with the prevention and awareness of all types of domestic violence and child abuse

Driver's Education

Policy Council Action Steps:

- invite the court referral officer to be involved with the CPC
- encourage parents of juvenile problem drivers to attend driving school with their child
- investigate, research and encourage development of a local driving school for teens
- work with the Latino community concerning driver's education

Juvenile Justice

Policy Council Action Steps:

- continue to seek funding for building and maintenance costs for a detention facility
- work with JPO to refer violent juveniles to lock down
- insure communities are better served by having a local detention facility in the county and by adding more beds for both males and females
- insure that a local detention facility has the required services to help in the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders and their families
- continue to support funding for administration of home monitoring and GPS tracking system for problematic juvenile offenders
- Continue to support funding for coordination of Community Services Program and supervision of juvenile offenders ordered to perform community services in lieu of other court ordered sanctions
- Continue to support funding for Residential Step-Down Program for juvenile offenders prior to re-integration into the community following commitment to a state institution, orders to secure detention or orders to boot camp.

Gang Involvement

Policy Council Action Steps:

- identify early intervention of gang involvement
- encourage local law enforcement to share information
- educate community about gang activity
- MCCPC will collaborate with local agencies on educational materials related to gang involvement
- support the county district attorney's program called "FREEZE"

Education - Children

learn the skills necessary to become productive citizens.

Family education services

Policy Council Action Steps:

- increase demonstrated support of existing programs providing family/parenting education services by reviewing the same to prevent duplication of services and to make sure they meet the requirements set forth in the MCCPC Needs Assessment
- endorse and support programs providing early childhood and parenting education with PACT, the Mental Health Association, Even Start/Head start, and similar agencies
- support programs and provide services that promote drug awareness, drug violence prevention, violence intervention and drug and violence treatment with community agencies

School Safety

Policy Council Action Steps:

- endorse and support programs supporting the safe school initiative
- implement firearms safety education programs into the elementary schools
- implement coordinated emergency preparedness plans into all schools within the county, which would deal with Columbine type and other similar emergency/disaster situation
- identify funding for security camera systems and aerial photo systems to aid in emergency preparedness and response to all schools in our county

Alternative education

Policy Council Action Steps:

- endorse and support programs providing alternative education for children attending public schools
- endorse and support programs providing adult continuing education (i.e. GED, ESL, vocational support, and work force development) for families with children, ages 6-19

- increase collaboration among support agencies to prevent duplication of services among supporting agencies by emails, MCCPC website and presentation before the policy council and its regularly scheduled meetings

Transportation

Policy Council Action Steps:

- increase demonstrated support by agencies of existing transportation issues
- access creative ways that agencies can collaborate to assist families with children ages 6-19 in accessing transportation services (i.e. scheduling, appointments, carpooling, etc.)
- collaborate with various agencies in educating parents about responsible parenting as it relates to school issues (i.e. attendance and punctuality)
- monitor transportation needs of families with children and report those needs to the county commission, Decatur City Council and other local municipalities
- retrieve information from the school systems and report at the regularly scheduled MCCPC meetings regarding transportation issues affecting the children of the county

Truancy

Policy Council Action Steps:

- endorse programs that strike at school drop out and truancy
- support programs that provide and support services for truant and school drop out children and discourage school dropouts
- support programs and provide services that promote academic achievement and regular attendance and truancy issues

Early Care and Education - Children (0 – 5) are provided opportunities to fully develop emotionally, socially, physically, and cognitively and are ready to succeed.

Family education services

Policy Council Action Steps:

- increase demonstrated support of existing programs providing family/parenting education services
- endorse and support programs providing early childhood and parenting education
- endorse and support programs providing adult continuing education (i.e. GED, ESL, vocational support, and workforce development) for families with children 0-5
- increase collaboration among supporting agencies to prevent duplication of services
- encourage access to quality childcare, universally available, to all working parents regardless of work schedule or income

Transportation

Policy Council Action Steps:

- increase demonstrated support by agencies of existing transportation resources
- assess creative ways that agencies can collaborate to assist families with children ages 0-5 in accessing transportation services (i.e. scheduling appointments, carpooling, etc)
- monitor transportation needs of families with children ages 0-5 and report those needs to the county commission, Decatur City Council and other local municipalities

Child Health

Policy Council Action Steps:

- appoint a community task force to acquire a community consensus to address the issue of teen pregnancy and its prevention
- identify existing efforts and increase demonstrated support of existing programs designed to address teen pregnancy prevention
- identify factors that lead to teen pregnancy
- disseminate information of current research trends regarding teen pregnancy and its prevention
- implement programs, which deal with the issue of responsibilities with regard to paternity
- identify and encourage existing efforts of faith based organizations to formulate programs regarding teen pregnancy prevention

Advocacy

Policy Council Action Steps:

- advocate for best practices within the educational system (i.e. those that reflect age appropriate curriculum and expectations with regard to children 0-5)
- advocate for age appropriate interaction and expectations for children, ages 0-5 within the family system
- advocate for Latino families in the community (i.e. citizenship opportunities, drivers license requirements, traffic law, and family support and Community resource opportunities).

Prenatal Health

Policy Council Action Steps:

- Encourage the availability and use of affordable prenatal care for all residents of our county

Economic Security

- Children grow up in a financially stable home where the child's basic needs can be met.

Transportation

Policy Council Action Steps:

- support community task force developed to address transportation issues and report to the policy council quarterly
- encourage grant funding and innovative solutions that are generated by individual agencies in attempts to alleviate student transportation issues
- collaborate with local medical facilities, schools, MCATS, volunteer center and Madison County to coordinate transportation services by using the current fleet of buses
- share information with other agencies by developing a database of information regarding transportation sources (i.e. times, fee, and destinations)
- assess ways agencies can work together to assist families and children with transportation problems in accessing needed services (i.e. scheduling, appointments, sharing transportation responsibilities, etc)

Literacy/English as a second language, and GED attainment

Policy Council Action Steps:

- provide endorsement and support to literacy programs such as Even Start, which assist with ESL and GED acquisition
- endorse and support initiatives that provide career development and vocational skills
- collaborate with the county chamber of commerce workforce development, county EDA, Calhoun Community College, local school systems and any other agencies investigating the need for a trade school type alternative curriculum for the student desiring to enter the skilled labor workforce
- cultivate support to form and develop partnerships with the business community in order to assist with job placement for those youth entering the workforce
- continue support with the development of the System of Services Center, a continuum of service for youth at risk
- maintain a collaborative relationship with the Decatur Youth Services
- identify the possibility of year round ESL classes for youth
- identify ways to cultivate relationships with members of the Latino community in order to overcome the communicating barrier
- form a coalition of various Latino leaders to better aid in developing job training and opportunities for their children

Parent Involvement and Skills - Parents and guardians participation and effectiveness in fostering an environment for children to become mature, responsible and independent adults.

Community collaboration

Policy Council Action Steps:

- work with the school systems within the county to develop the "Full-Circle school." Project wherein local agencies, mental health workers and parent volunteers join forces to identify and address the needs of children and families by providing onsite mini-resource centers located within specific schools
- keep school counselors aware of available resources
- disseminate information through television, radio shows, newspapers, and PTA newsletters
- distribute bilingual brochures and flyers to schools, churches, businesses, public libraries, public health department, and other agencies
- develop email network and intranet website for coordination of service information so that resource information is readily available to all Morgan County CPC member agencies and their employees
- expand the Family Resource Center (s) into neighborhoods, specifically the Latino neighborhoods (apartment complexes, Wal-Mart or similar shopping outlets)
- establish a sub-committee of faith-based organizations to work with family resource centers
- work with community to develop mini-resource centers at Wal-Mart and similar shopping outlets to inform the public of services available within the community via a kiosk and store employees (English and Spanish language information)

Parent Education

Policy Council Action Steps:

- offer parental education classes in neighborhoods (schools, churches, Boys & Girls clubs, etc.) to promote involvement and participation of parents
- offer optional times for parenting classes by taking the classes to the work place
- provide childcare along with parenting classes
- use service network to provide transportation to classes
- find and employ bilingual parent educators

Parents & Guardians/ Custodial Issues

Policy Council Action Steps:

- promote fatherhood initiatives and involvement
- develop classes for divorced parents and non co-habiting parents through the court system

Policy Recommendation

1. State level agency collaboration in sharing information with each other in order to develop community-based resources.
2. To be legally allowed to share a child's information among agencies when two or more agencies work with that child.
3. Increasing funding for multi-needs children being served by more than one agency
4. Interfacing among automated (computer) systems maintained by the various State agencies, which deal with children and the provision of services to children.
5. Supporting and enhancing the immediate delivery of mental health services in crisis situations for children.
6. Increasing transportation services for parents and children so that agency services may be accessed.
7. Constructing a local juvenile detention center for any county of at least 90,000 population.
8. Identifying and addressing issues involving drugs, gangs and violence on both a State wide and local basis.